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## PRESS RELEASE

### RWANDA: ARTICLE 19 Submits Report to United Nations Universal Periodic Review

**In the submission to the Human Rights Council on July 6, ARTICLE 19 outlined its concerns about the failure of the Rwandan Government to protect freedom of expression in the country. The submission, filed in preparation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Rwanda in early 2011, describes the current legal challenges to freedom of expression and press freedom in Rwanda, and highlights the dangerous atmosphere for journalists and other critics of the Government.**

The ARTICLE 19 submission cites Rwanda's laws on defamation, genocide ideology, and other restrictive legislation on the media as major reasons for the lack of independence of the media, the absence of media pluralism, and the intimidation of political opponents and other critics of the government. The submission also raises concerns about various forms of harassment and intimidation, including physical attacks against journalists and political opponents that have forced the Rwandan media to operate in an atmosphere of pervasive self-censorship and have helped destroy media pluralism.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Human Rights Council to address the concerns raised in its submission and urges the HRC to issue the following recommendations to the Rwanda Government:

- Repeal all criminal defamation provisions and replace them with appropriate provisions in the civil law;
- Immediately review the 2009 Media Law, with a view to bringing it in line with international standards;
- Review the system of media regulation and repeal all provisions that interfere with freedom of the media, and create and maintain an environment in which the media can work freely, effectively and independently from political influence;
- Conduct speedy, effective and impartial investigations of all cases of physical attacks against journalists, in particular the killing of Jean Leonard Rugambage;
- Cease harassment of journalists and conduct an independent review of all cases of journalists imprisoned, fined or prosecuted in connection with their professional work, with a view to release those wrongfully imprisoned;

- Ensure that opposition voices are not excluded from Rwanda's political process, compromising freedom of expression during a pivotal period in the country's development;
- Repeal the Genocide Ideology Law in its entirety, refrain from adopting a similar law in the future and fully implement Rwanda's actual obligations under international human rights treaties.

ENDS

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- For a copy of ARTICLE 19 submission to the Human Rights Council, see <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/submissions/rwanda-article-19-s-submission-to-the-universal-periodic-review.pdf>.
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.